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ABSTRACT

New literature for children about their world, the people in the world's communities, and about societal issues of common global concern continue to be published and distributed. Engaging pupils in their literacy learning through books that mirror cultural diversity is an effective process. As a community of learners, they become comfortable in interacting with the text in books about their own and parallel cultures. Books being published for children that reflect views of unity and community have increased in numbers. Books published in 1995 that address the dimensions of community, unity, and communitarianism fall into three categories: books about the cultural interconnectedness of children, families, and communities; selections about common ecological and biological conditions and concerns; and literature highlighting societal issues and problems. Ideas, strategies, and literature response activities can be used to engage children in literacy learning with books on unity and community. (Contains a 42-item annotated bibliography and a chart relating activities that engage children to specific books.) (RS)

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Literacy Experiences Through Children's Books That Reflect Global Community Views

Elaine Vilscek, Ph.D.

I. INTRO

*Play the audiotape as the audience is assembling!

"What A Wonderful World," featuring Louis Armstrong on lyrics by George Weiss and Bob Thiele

The audiotape being played as you came in to this session is, of course, a classic rendition of "What a Wonderful World" by the great American musician, Louis Armstrong. The book that I'm holding illustrates the lyrics of the song and was a timely publication in 1995. This past October 24th marked the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations. It's just one example of a number of other children's books, published this past year, that projects the theme of my presentation this morning, "Literacy Learning Through Children's Books That Reflect Unity and Community Amidst Global Diversity."

I used the book and audiotape of "What a Wonderful World" this past October in a multiage first/second grade classroom to introduce the concept of the United Nations as a large family celebrating its birthday. My intent was to enable youngsters, even at these early age levels, to begin connecting their individual (but diverse) experiences with family - extended family at home to school, to local/state/national/and worldwide community.

We talked about and charted how families and their individual members are alike and are different, how members of a family may live together, nearby, or at distances. We "zoomed in" on some things children in families see inside or outside their classrooms or homes that are alike or are different and drew and wrote

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about them. And, we speculated about and hopefully became aware of why caring about one another and the world we live in are important. For young children such an awareness is a foundation upon which higher level conceptualizations of community and unity can be further extended. Multicultural children's selections, like "What a Wonderful World" and others, are invaluable instructional resources.

Consequently, during this conference session, I plan:

Overlay 1

SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. To identify dimensions of the board concepts of community, unity, and communitarianism that I looked for and found in sampling children's multicultural books (ages K-14 yrs.)

2. To involve session participants in examining and evaluating the quality of sampled selections

3. To highlight some related literature response activities and instructional strategies that also engage children in literacy learning

II. Terms, Concepts, and Dimensions of Community, Unity, and Communitarianism

Dimensions of the concepts of community, unity, and communitarianism have been expressed almost as long as we've been educating youngsters in the United States. Our people, whose roots can be traced around the globe, are likened to a multicultural mosaic of humanity. "Multicultural Education", "Education for a Global Society" and "Educational Curriculums of Cultural Inclusion" are labels that we've used for some years. More specifically, we have reaffirmed the necessity of enabling pupils to view the interconnections and essential interdependence among cultures around the world. We hope to develop in youth, the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable them to live with others productively on this planet, limited in natural resources but enriched by ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity. Global perspectives that include a focus on the understanding of people, problems, solutions, from various cultural orientations are regarded as essential. Youngsters in our shrinking world must learn that there are many ecological, medical, social, and survival problems they commonly share and can ultimately seek solutions to collaboratively.

It is not easy to develop cross cultural concepts, understandings and skills among children. However, we have found that engaging pupils in their literacy learning through books that mirror cultural cultural diversity is an effective process. As a community of learners, they become comfortable in interacting with the text in books about own and parallel cultural. They realize, too, that the "meanings" they make as they read are different but appropriate. Furthermore, they can appreciate

how sharing personal responses to culturally focused literature with peers and teachers lends to expanding understandings about differences and recognizing likenesses in people, places, and situations around the globe.

Books being published for children that reflect views of unity and community have continually increased in numbers. Consequently, I have been interested in them and have examined them to determine whether or not the books reflected the following dimensions;

Overlay 2

DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY, UNITY, COMMUNITARIANISM

- Evidence of bonding that makes a group cohesive, connected, and unified
- Depiction of individuals who have expectations and obligations to one another in a group
- A projection of humans, though culturally diverse, who share common needs and problems
- Presentation of individuals, families, local/state/national/international communities interconnected through or impacted by the same or parallel collegial concerns or by common societal conditions
- References to, inferences of mutual caring, responsibility, cooperation, and action

III. Sharing Books (for ages K-14 yrs) That Reflect Dimensions of Community, Unity, Communitarianism

During the past couple of years, I have been a member of an IRA Children's Literature Special Interest Group Committee for the selection of multicultural children's literature that deserves award recognition. Publishers of such literature have sent us hundreds of books for review and award consideration. This is a new IRA award and the final 25 books recognized for 1995 were announced at the IRA Convention in New Orleans this past May. Many of the books that I'll be sharing with you were award nominees sent by publishers in 1995. Others were publications I personally searched for and obtained. Since time will permit me to share only a limited number of the current books that address the dimensions of community, unity, and communitarism, you'll receive a more complete annotated bibliography of all of them.

As I sorted the related selections, they fell into three categories of focus:

Overlay 3

CATEGORIES OF BOOK FOCUS

1. Books About the Cultural Interconnectedness of Children, Families, and Communities

2. Selections About Common Ecological and Biological Conditions and Concerns

3. Literature Highlighting Societal Issues and Problems

CHILDREN'S MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE THAT REFLECTS DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY, UNITY, COMMUNITARIANISM

* Category of Focus: 1. Cultural Interconnectedness of Children, Families, and Communities

Book Title	Author/Illustrator /Publisher/Date	Age Levels	Dimensions of Community, Unity, Communitarianism, That Are Highlighted
My Song is Beautiful	Hoberman/New York, Toronto, & London: Little, Brown/1994	K-8	Fourteen poems that celebrate childhood in a variety of global cultures and speak to what sets children apart and what draws them together.
Children Just Like Me	Kindersley and Dorling/New York & London: Kindersley Publ. & UNICEF/1995	K-12	Photographic essay that highlights interviews with children from 30 countries around the world; Foreword by H. Belafonte suggests though differences exist, similarities abound.
This Is The Way We Eat Our Lunch	Baer/Bjorkman/New York: Scholastic/1995	6-10	Rhymes and illustrations of children around the world and what they eat; recipes in the back of the book.
Day in September	Nascimbene/San Diego & London: Harcourt, Brace/1995	6-12	Parallels of the daily lives of two children, a rich boy in Paris and poor girl in California who meet by chance at a baseball game in the US and share a moment to remember.
One Hundred Is a Family	Munoz-Ryan/Huang/ New York: Hyperion/1994	K-9	Picture book that celebrates the multiple meanings of family, connecting people and the ways in which all belong to an ever widening circle of community.
Weddings	Morris/New York: Lee & Shepard Books	All Ages	Marriage customs and ceremonial rites around the world appear as photographs in this picturebook.
Material World, A Global Family Portrait	Menzel/San Francisco: Sierra Club/1994	6-12	Vivid photographic portrayal of the human condition in 30 nations around the globe; reveals a commonality of aspirations and the dignity of humanity though wide disparities of wealth and physical settings exist.
Boundless Grace	Hoffman/Bench/New York: Dial/1995	6-9	Based on the theme, "families are what you make of them," Grace wonders how she'll deal with one in the US and the other in Africa; mutual caring emphasized.
Kwanzaa Karamu	Brady/Knutson/R & D Wolfe/Minneapolis: Carolrhoda/ 1995	9-12	African celebration of life, family, friends, and cooperative community work and achievements; recipes, crafts, Swahili vocabulary included.

Book Title	Author/Illustrator/ Publisher/Date	Age Levels	Dimensions of Community, Unity, Communitarianism, That Are Highlighted
Market	Lewin/New York: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard/1996	All Ages	Picture book about how people in various places around the globe come to market to sell or buy what is grown, caught, or made.
Festivals	Livingston/Fisher/New York: Holiday House/1996	9-12	Stories, rituals, symbols, traditions, and foods of fourteen multicultural festivals around the globe.
Ogbo: Sharing Life in an African Village	Onyefulu/San Diego & London: Harcourt, Brace/1996	5-8	Children born in an Eastern Nigerian village are grouped together for the intent of uniting them for lifelong fellowship. They celebrate festivals, share chores and accomplishments.
My Fellow Americans	Provensen/San Diego: Browndr Press/1995	9-12	Pictorial history of Americans, across ethnic/racial groups, who share parallel recognition as inventors, reformers, writers, warriors and patriots, entertainers, visionaries, geniuses, etc.; lends insight to belonging within one American family.
Sacred Places	Shannon/New York: Harcourt Brace/1996	All Ages	A collection of poems that captures the holiness of sacred sites around the world.

* Category of Focus: 2. Selections About Common Ecological and Biological Conditions and Concerns

Book Title	Author/Illustrator/ Publisher/Date	Age Levels	Dimensions of Community, Unity, Communitarianism, That Are Highlighted
What a Wonderful World	Bryan/New York: Atheneum/1995	K-9	Beauty, harmony, hope to be shared by the world's children and adults expressed through this picturebook that depicts the song lyrics written by Weiss and Thiele (Audiotape by Louis Armstrong, MCA Records, 1988)
The Earth Pack	Vander Meer & Fisher/Washington, DC: National Geographic/1995	9-14	A three dimensional action book, accompanied by an audiotape that projects nature's forces (i.e., tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes, etc.) on the planet earth; includes suggestions for management of potential destruction and the value of these forces as well.

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Book Title	Author/Illustrator/ Publisher/Date	Age Levels	Dimensions of Community, Unity, Communitarianism, That Are Highlighted
The Living Earth	Schmid/New York & London: North South Books/1994	K-9	Introduces the complexities of the ecosystem and man's dependence on it for survival.
Mother Earth	Luenn/Waldman/New York: Atheneum and Canada: Maxwell Mac Millan/1992	K-9	A celebration of earth as rich, alive, and nurturing with reminders that humans must not only take but return earth's gifts, too.
Everyday Is Earth Day	Ross/Holm/Connecticut: Millbrook/1995	7-10	Directions for children in making Earth Day related crafts from everyday materials.
Earth, Fire, Water, Air	Hoffman/Ray/New York: Dutton/1995	9-13	Connects cultures and literature, past and present, through the elements of life; includes myths, legends, images, and ideas from around the world linking fire, water, and air to humans; suggests ways to conserve and rejuvenate.
The Story of Rosy Dock	Baker/New York: Greenwillow/1995	6-10	A picturebook of collage constructions that depicts the consequences of the introduction of the plant, "Rosy Dock", to Australia where it has pushed many native plants and animals to extinction
Barubay, Australia	Weir & Weir/New York: Hyperion/1995	9-13	Bob Weir of the Grateful Dead Band and his sister Wendy collaborated on this book dedicated to preserving life forms on and around the beautiful coral reefs in Australia.
Fernando's Gift	Keister/San Francisco: Sierra Books/1995	6-9	Written in English and Spanish as an expressed appreciation a Costa Rican boy and his family have for the beauty and delicate balance of the rain forest environment.
Everglades	Craighead George/ Minor/New York: Harper Collins/1995	8-11	An Indian storyteller describes the destruction, over time, of the plant and animal life that was a part of a unique ecosystem, the Florida Everglades; a hope for its renewal by tomorrow's adults is also expressed.
Global Cities: Project Eco-City	Parker/Great Britain: Wayland Ltd./1994 and New York: Thomson Learning/1995	9-13	Concern for the people who live in cities and their quality of life is focused; ecological and biological conditions are described.

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Book Title	Author/Illustrator/ Publisher/Date	Age Levels	Dimensions of Community, Unity, Communitarianism, That Are Highlighted
All the King's Animals	Kessler/PA: Boyd Mills/1995	9-13	A photographic essay about the successful return of endangered wildlife to Swaziland, Africa through the work of the conservationist, Ted Reilly.
Rough Sketches	Berry/Florczak/San Diego & London: Harcourt, Brace/1996	All Ages	A descriptive poem that reflects earth's beauty; sketches depict various settings around the world.
Thunder Cave	Smith/New York: Hyperion/1995	10-15	A 14 yr. old boy travels to Kenya in search of his father who is researching elephant behavior; experiences with the horrors of poachers who seek elephant tusks are graphically described in this realistic fictional selection.
The Destruction of the Environment	Gartner/New York: Rosen Publ./1994	10-15	How people and all living creatures, the air, land, and water are connected; a focus on the environmental movement and ways people and governments can help.
Vanishing Ozone	Pringle/New York: Wm. Morrow/1995	10-15	An assessment of the threat posed by a growing loss of ozone; what people, around the earth can do to protect themselves
Learning to Live in the World	Stafford/San Diego & London: Harcourt, Brace/1994	10-15	A collection of 50 poems unified by the themes of earth-loving and earth keeping.
Time Ghost	Katz/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre/1994	10-15	Set in the 21st century, two 12 year old girls are transported back in time to the late 20th century and to the beauty of central Canada with threat of destruction by a developer.

* Category of Focus: 3. Literature Highlighting Other Societal Issues and Problems.

Book Title	Author/Illustrator /Publisher/Date	Age Levels	Dimensions of Community, Unity, Communitarianism, That Are Highlighted
Why	Popov/New York & London: North South Books/1996	All Ages	A cautionary tale; a picturebook without words that illustrates the consequences of unprovoked aggression. Two-animal characters, a mouse and a frog symbolically depict the message.

Book Title	Author/Illustrator /Publisher/Date	Age Levels	Dimensions of Community, Unity, Communitarianism, That Are Highlighted
The Greatest Table	Rosen/San Diego and London: Harcourt, Brace/1994	7-12	A twelve foot long accordion book that when opened, displays a leaf that depicts children and their families around the world sharing food; created to aid the "Share Our Strength" worldwide project.
Feathers and Fools	Fox/Wilton/San Diego & London: Harcourt, Brace/1996	7-12	Written in the format of a modern fable, the tale illustrates how fears about differences between some peacocks and swans lead them to destroying each other.
This Home We Have Made	Hammond/Matumis/ New York: Crown/1993	8-10	An expression of hope and promise depicted in the images on a real mural in the South Bronx; painted by formerly homeless children on an outside wall of an apartment building in which they now reside
The Last Safe Place on Earth	Peck/New York: Delacorte/1995	11-14	Realistic fictional story about a family who leaves a suburb where violence is escalating and settles in a picture perfect neighborhood; Satan-fearing fundamentalism, parental alcoholism, book banning, child neglect and homophobia are issues that surface, nevertheless, in the new community of residence.
My Wish for Tomorrow	United Nations & Jim Henson Publishing/New York: Tambourine Books/1995	K-14	Fifty children's comments and 40 of their drawings that are responses to the question - "If You Were Granted One Wish To Make The World A Better Place What Would It Be?"; children, ages 4-14 yrs., address a multitude of diverse societal concerns and issues.
On Wings of Peace	Hamanka/New York: Clarion/1995	6-14	A collection of the prose and poetry by famous authors and illustrators exploring personal and community violence, international conflict, and the environmental dangers of nuclear holocaust.
Peace Crane	Hamanka/New York: Morrow/1995	7-10	An African American girl calls to the memory of Sadako's Peace Crane to carry her and other children out the violence of their own families and communities.

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Book Title	Author/Illustrator /Publisher/Date	Age Levels	Dimensions of Community, Unity, Communitarianism, That Are Highlighted
It's Our World, Too!	Hoose/New York, Toronto, & London: Little Brown/1993	8-14	True accounts by young activists around the world who are addressing a variety of societal conditions and concerns through their projects in Part I of the book; Part II is a handbook that highlights why and how one can get involved.
Homeless	Wolf/New York: Orchard/1995	7-10	Photographic factual account of a homeless 9 yr. old and his family caught in the reality of poverty and public assistance in NY City.

IV: Using Criteria To Examine/Evaluate Multicultural Books: About Cultural Interconnectedness of Children, Families, and Communities; About Common Ecological and Biological Conditions and Concerns; About Societal Issues and Problems

A. Organize the Audience into Small Groups (5 to 8 per group) to Use the Criteria

Overlay 5

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON WHEN EXAMINING MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE ABOUT UNITY AND COMMUNITY

1. What is the primary focus or dimension of unity/ community the author addresses in the book?

2. Is the communitarian theme or dimension(s) of unity/ community of substantial significance?

3. Is the selection factual, "factional" or fictional?

4. Is the dimension(s) of unity or community in the text appropriate to the age levels for whom the book appears to be written?

5. Does the author(s) present credentials or evidence that he/she has expertise on the book topic or focus?

6. Is the content of the book, presented as factual and accurate?

7. To what degree does the selection elicit a reader's or listener's feelings of responsibility, caring, or involvement? Does it lend a base from which a classroom teacher can build these feelings with children?

8. To what degree does the literature elicit the child's desire for further inquiry about the topic?

9. Does the selection possess other characteristics of good children's literature?

V. Using the Books With Children

IDEAS, STRATEGIES, AND LITERATURE RESPONSE ACTIVITIES THAT ENGAGE CHILDREN IN LITERACY LEARNING WITH BOOKS ON UNITY AND COMMUNITY

1. Involve youngsters, in a small group or as a whole class, to write to one of the following national groups for young children and youth. Responses from the groups are likely. Information about how to network with an established chapter of the group is generally sent upon request.

   * Kids Against Pollution (Grade K-6)
     P O Box 775
     Closter, NJ 07624

   * (CAKE) Concern About Kids Environment (Grade K-6)
     Mast Landing Elementary School
     116 Bow Street
     Freeport, ME 04032

   * Young and Teen Peacemakers, Inc. (Grade 2-12)
     RD 1 Box 171
     W. Edmeston, NY 13485

2. Encourage youngsters to gather added focused information/statistics through library and computer research, interviews telephone surveys, etc. School administrative and parent permission may be necessary for some information gathering projects.

3. Involve youngsters in determing an ecological or environmental issue of interest. To activate the concern and participation of others they may:

   * create a petition for others in their school building to sign.

   * write a letter to the Editor of a local newspaper.

   * communicate with mayor, governor, or a legislator.

4. Suggest youngsters may respond, thusly, to some of the specific children's books charted by categories of focus:

Activity	Books
a. Create a Family Tree or an Album of Portraits that includes immediate and extended family. Document some of the activities that bring family/ extended family together or unify them as a group	*One Hundred is a Family* - (Ryan/Huang) *Material World, A Global Family Portrait* - (Menzel) *Boundless Grace* - (Hoffman/Bench) *My Fellow Americans* - (Provensen) *Ogbo* (Onyefulu) *Festivals* (Livingston/Fisher) *Weddings* - (Morris)
b. Make a Recipe File of "What We Eat For Lunch" or "What We Eat At Special Family Gatherings"	*This is the Way We Eat Our Lunch* - (Baer/Björkman) *Kwanzaa Karamu* - (Brady/Knutson, R & D. Wolfe) *The Greatest Table* - (Rosen)
c. Construct an Action Book, with pop-ups, an audiotape, maps, etc. on seasonal changes, the ecosystem beneath our feet, or vanishing plant or animal species. Research the folk literature for stories that earlier civilizations created to explain the occurrence or disappearance of natural phenomena; write summaries of them.	*The Earth Pack* - (Vaner Meer/Fisher) *The Living Earth* - (Schmid) *Mother Earth* - (Luenn/Waldman) *Earth, Fire, Water, Air* - (Hoffman & Ray)
d. Collect news articles with photos from the newspaper or science magazines (i.e. Ranger Rick, The National Geographic, etc.) that document some projects to conserve/preserve lands, plants, or animals. Mount these in a Scrapbook that allows for a continuing to add others.	*Barubay* - Weir, B. & W.) *Fernandos' Gift* - (Keister) *Everglades* - (Craighead-George) *All the Kinds' Animals* - (Kessler) *The Destruction of the Environment* - (Gartner) *Vanishing Ozone* - (Morrow)
e. Begin an Observation Log of plant growth in sidewalk cracks. Note the survival strength of the plant and the potential damage it may create.	*The Story of Rosy Dock* - (Baker)
f. After reading a fictional book that Includes plausible and true scientific facts, make a Venn Diagram to sort out true facts, plausible information, and fictional data. Use other factual resources to check whether or not your Venn Diagram interpretations are correct.	*Thunder Cafe* - (Smith) *Time Ghost* - (Katz) (2)
g. Draw a Map of your neighborhood at the beginning of the school year that includes special landmarks such as large trees, open fields, particular buildings, etc. Put it away until the end of the year. Look at it for changes that have taken place.	*Global Cities* - (Parker) *Rough Sketches* - (Berry/Florczak)
h. Write your own answer to the question: "If You Were Granted One Wish to Make the World A Better Place What Would It Be?"	*My Wish for Tomorrow* - (United Nations & Jim Henson Publishing) *Learning to Live in the World* - (Stafford)

Activity	Books
i. Start a campaign in your school to cut food coupons from Sunday or weekly newspaper advertising sections. Donate these to the nearest chapter to your city or county "Food Bank" to feed the less fortunate.	*The Greatest Table* - (Rosen)
j. Organize a group who will interview teachers and the principal in your school about ways to promote peach in your school and neighborhood. Ask your interviewees to meet with your group to help you plan remedying action.	*Why* - (Popov) *Feather and Fools* - (Fox) *On Wings of Peach* - (Hamanka) *Peace Crane* - (Hamanka)

IV. Closing

The literature for children about their world, the people in the world's communities, and about societal issues of common global concern is available from and distributed by publishing companies in America, Canada, Great Britain, and other identified global distribution locations. International Organizations, such as CODE (the Canadian Organizations for Development Through Education joined by other countries) are also helping educators to access books globally.

And, new materials continue to be published and distributed. You entered this session as Louis Armstrong eloquently professed "What a Wonderful World" we live in. As you leave, the audiotape of the *Earth Pack* produced by the National Geographic Society offers a different dimension - that of reality in our natural surroundings. Thank you for coming to this session.